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Floor Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Introduction of North Korea Intelligence Enhancement Act and Asia-Pacific Defense Commission Act
April 5, 2017

Mr. Speaker:

Today I will introduce two bills to enhance our nation's security and make the American people safer.

Of all the security challenges that the United States confronts, the most serious threat arguably stems from North Korea under its dangerous and unpredictable dictator.

North Korea, which has the fourth-largest military in the world, continues to make progress on its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, in violation of international sanctions.

Since 2006, North Korea has tested a nuclear device five times. The main goal of North Korea's nuclear weapons program is to develop a warhead small enough to be mounted on a ballistic missile.

Unfortunately, North Korea has shown substantial, even startling, progress in its missile programs. Since 2014, North Korea has conducted nearly 50 test launches of ballistic missiles.

North Korea is an imminent threat to our allies South Korea and Japan and the nearly 80,000 U.S. troops serving in those two countries.

And, as its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs advance, North Korea poses a rising threat to the U.S. homeland itself.

The U.S. policy approach to North Korea must be comprehensive and carefully calibrated. Miscalculation could result in armed conflict, possibly involving the use of nuclear weapons, and cause catastrophic loss of life.

To be effective, U.S. strategy must be informed by the best possible intelligence on North Korea's intentions and capabilities.

North Korea is a difficult intelligence target. It is a secretive society where dissent is severely punished. This makes the recruitment of human sources inside the country very challenging. Moreover, high-level defectors from North Korea with intelligence about the regime are rare.

My first bill would require the Director of National Intelligence to create a North Korea-focused integration cell consisting of experts who would streamline, synthesize and synchronize intelligence on North Korea so that U.S. policymakers have the best information possible upon which to base decisions.

The cell would seek to ensure that the U.S. government is collecting intelligence on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, missile programs, weapon sales, and other activities that violate U.N. sanctions. The cell would also work to make certain that this intelligence is efficiently disseminated to the appropriate national security policymakers so it can inform decision-making.

While my first bill is specific to North Korea, my second bill seeks to safeguard Americans by promoting security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region more broadly.

This region encompasses about 40 countries containing over 60 percent of the world's population, including many of our top import and export partners.

The region offers the United States economic opportunities, but also presents security challenges. Indeed, senior American officials often describe the Asia-Pacific as the most consequential region for the future of our country.

Historically, under presidents of both parties, the U.S. has maintained a strong military and diplomatic presence in the region to reassure allies and deter adversaries. The core of U.S. strategy has been close cooperation with our regional partners.

These partnerships are an essential component of our effort to confront aggression by North Korea, judiciously manage the rise of China, dismantle terrorist networks, ensure freedom of navigation in international waters, guarantee the free flow of commerce, respond to humanitarian emergencies, and promote respect for the rule of law.

These partnerships, built on mutual trust, are not self-sustaining. They require U.S. leadership, energy, and resources.

To deepen cooperation, my bill would create a commission of U.S. security officials and their counterparts from willing regional partner nations.

The commission would aim to increase military readiness, strengthen counterterrorism operations, enhance maritime security, bolster cybersecurity, and improve intelligence coordination.

The commission would send a clear signal to allies and adversaries alike that the U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific region is intensive and enduring.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support these two bills, which are aimed at addressing the immediate threat posed by North Korea and strengthening our security alliances with key regional partners.